

Letter from Orlando Gray to Juliana Reynolds, May 26, 1862

Camp near Bottoms Bridge

ten miles from Richmond

May 26th 1862

Dear Sister,

It seems a long time since I heard from you or Emiline. Having wrote two letters at Williamsburgh [Williamsburg] soon after the Battle and have not recivd an answer to either which is some twenty days ago. But I think it must be the fault of the mails. As you will see by the heading of this letter we are gradually approaching the Capitol of rebeldom who we may encounter before we reach that hot bed of Secession I am not able to say. The reports from our Scouts to day are rather favorable to evacuation. But one thing is shur they will either evacuate inside of a week or be a whiped community or else the army of the Potomac is not what I think it is.

Tilton was at my Quarters this morning he says that he has not recivd a letter in answer to any he has wrote since the Battle. He is Stout and hearty. He is attached to the provst Guard and Quarters of Gen Kearney's head Quarters. John is very hearty. We have just partook of a very sumptous dinner consisting of some Cold pork which we have on hand ready for a march, the remnant of a loaf of Bread which I paid twenty cents for yesterday and a cup of Coffe. We also have some very good pepper sauce in a small Bottle which John carries in his pocket consisting of some red peppers and some water. Sometimes we feel rich enough to invest forty Cents in a lb of cheese but very rarely fearing that too many luxuries might be injurious to the health. I forgot to state that the loaf of bread mentioned

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was the first I had since we left Fortress Monroe. And although our individual health is good I am sorry to say it is not so with our Regiment. Our report this morning shows one hundred and sixty on the sick list and every move decimates our ranks from fifteen to twenty. This mornings papers contains full particulars of the Williamsburgh [Williamsburg] battle and also diagrams of the battlefield but no pen will ever describe the Scene that met the eye on the morning of the fifth of May. The thing is impossible and I hope that our brave soldier[s] will never have to witness it again.

Capt Hamilton and my self visited a Cecesh house last evening. The Occupants Consisted of the owner, his wife and sisterinlaw. These were the first White women we have seen since we left Williamsburgh [Williamsburg]. The poor Deluded Creatures were nearly Scared to death but yet Strong Secessionists. They complained bitterly of the treatment they have recivd at the hands of the soldiers but they recivd but little comfort from us for we gently reminded them that they had been instrumental in bring on the war and now they were reaping the benifits. But as we get all our news out of the newspapers it is useless for me to writing what probably you will have read long before you receive this.

I stopped writing having heard that the mail had arrived at head Quarters and thinking that probably their might be a letter for me and sure enough there was and I knew from the well filled envelope that it was from the same dear friend that I was writing to. You will please except my dearest thanks for the beautiful white envelope enclosed therin. Not on account of the pecuniary value nor because I stood in need of it but on account of the friendly motives which I know exists in the heart of the one who enclosed it that I thank you. I see that your letter is in answer to one that was wrote nearly a week after the battle at Williamsburgh [Williamsburg]. I wrote to you at Williamsburgh [Williamsburg] and also to Emiline and in that letter I undertook to give you a description of the battle and how we spent the night on the battle field &c but it seems that it has not been recivd by you but I shall not at this time undertake to repeat what transpired on the day and night of the fifth of May.

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Last night it rained and to day it is cold and disagreeable. We are under marching orders but are not in the advance. It is reported that there is a very heavy force at Richmond but I think the more they have the worse they will be off[f] for a large body of undisciplined men are very hard to manage. I have great confidence in our Regiment and feel as if nothing could stand before it. Our men are well drilled in the bayonet exercise and have long range guns and if we have any chance at all I am shur they will make their mark. Tilton and John are comparitively safe and I am glad of it.

I think that Thomas has concluded that I must write two letters to him in order to get one from him as he has not answered my last. I understand that he still feels verry hard towards Tilton. It grieves me sorely that this should be the case but believe me dear sister I think that it is a manufactured coldness for although he has the nack of appearing cold and unkind to those whom he is so disposed and of keeping it up yet I am confident that his looks not his language reflects his heart for no man would go farther to assist suffering humanity or do it in a kinder spirit than he would. And why should he presist so obstinately in turning the cold shoulder to one whose only crime has been to assist in putting down this cursed Rebellion. I cant immagine one who is now a man grown and who possesses all the natural abilities both Physical and mental to cope with and probably pass beyond a kind but in this case a much deluded fater. I say why it is so tis beyond my poor, weak comprehension but probably I have written to much on this subject but if so I beg to be excused for you know that I write pretty near what I think. Your letter informed me that my little family were all well and that Emiline would write soon. If any thing important [?] I will write agan soon. Please excuse bad writing and mistaks and also the abruptness with which I end one subject and begin another. And as I said before I think that we will be in Richmond [?] a [week?] of [?] a whiped community. Please give my kind regards to all inquiring friends and believe this to be from your Friend and Brother.

O. Gray